

## REFERENDUM QUESTION ON THE 2011 ANNUAL ELECTION BALLOT

*The Subcommittee on Professional Ethics has recommended to the Board of Directors a revision of the APA's Statement of Professional Ethics, and the Board has approved this new text. As required by the Statement,*

[http://apaclassics.org/index.php/about\\_the\\_APA/governance/apa\\_statement\\_on\\_professional\\_ethics](http://apaclassics.org/index.php/about_the_APA/governance/apa_statement_on_professional_ethics).

*such changes will not take effect unless they are also approved by the membership. The Board has therefore placed this referendum question on the 2011 annual election ballot. The referendum proposes revisions to the language of the Statement of Professional Ethics concerning procedures for reviewing submissions to scholarly journals. Members may vote to approve the changes, disapprove the changes, or abstain from voting.*

### EDITORIAL POLICY AND THE REFEREEING PROCESS

#### Current Language

Journals should have well defined and clearly stated editorial policies and should publish for readers the procedures for submission of articles. Editors have an obligation to ensure that all submissions are properly refereed and that decisions are rendered within a reasonable time. In order to encourage fair and objective judgments, manuscripts should always be assessed as anonymous submissions, and the substance of referees' assessments should be conveyed in writing to the author. Editors should choose referees from qualified scholars who are open minded, impartial and not unsympathetic to the subject matter and approach of the manuscript. A commitment to publish a manuscript, once communicated to the author, is binding on the journal or publisher. Scholars who are asked to assess a manuscript should decline in cases where they might have conflicts of interest which would impair their ability to make an objective assessment, or when such requests cannot be completed within a reasonable time. A referee has an obligation to inform an editor in cases where that referee has previously reviewed a manuscript.

#### Proposed Language (Proposed changes are in **boldface**):

Journals should have well defined and clearly stated editorial policies and should publish for readers the procedures for submission of articles. **Editorial decisions should be informed by appropriate scholarly criteria.** Editors have an obligation to ensure that all submissions are properly refereed. **When inviting referees, editors should specify their requirements and ask for a commitment that a decision be rendered within a stated period of time (preferably within 6 weeks).** In order to encourage fair and objective judgments, manuscripts should always be assessed as anonymous submissions, and the substance of referees' assessments should be conveyed in writing to the author. Editors should choose referees from qualified scholars who are open minded, impartial and not unsympathetic to the subject matter and approach of the manuscript. **A good referee's report is one that provides a fair, accurate, and informed assessment of the submission under consideration.** Scholars who are asked to **referee** a manuscript should decline in cases where they might have conflicts of interest which would impair their ability to make an objective assessment, or when such requests cannot be completed within **the time requested**. A referee has an obligation to inform an editor in cases where that referee has previously reviewed a manuscript. A commitment to publish a manuscript, once communicated to the author, is binding on the journal or publisher.

#### Rationale:

During the past year and a half, the Subcommittee on Professional Ethics received a few suggestions from members of the Association, aimed at strengthening the language of the Statement of Professional Ethics concerning procedures for reviewing submissions to scholarly journals. One colleague pointed out that the emphasis of the current paragraph seems to be more on ensuring that submissions are “properly refereed,” and on choosing qualified referees, rather than on articulating and endorsing the principle that the integrity of research publication in our discipline depends upon sound assessments made by the referees who have been chosen. The modest suggested additions to the text are aimed at giving some scholarly dimension to the phrase “properly refereed,” which is left without specification in the existing document.

Other colleagues expressed their consternation over the slowness with which some journals deal with submissions. Members of the Subcommittee are well aware of the fact that the vast majority of editors and referees make generous and concerted efforts to turn around submissions in a timely fashion; they also realize that unforeseen circumstances interfere on occasion with projected schedules. Nonetheless, the committee members agreed that strengthening the language concerning rendering editorial decisions and specifying a suggested window of time (“preferably within 6 weeks”) would be helpful to editors, referees, and scholars who are submitting their work for consideration.

Ballot:

On the official ballot you will be able to vote to approve the amended text, to disapprove the amended text, or to abstain.